CATALOGUES OF ART EXHIBITIONS ORGANIZED BY THE ARTS COUNCIL OF GREAT BRITAIN REPUBLISHED ON MICROFICHE

Published on microfiche by:

Chadwyck-Healey Ltd
45 South Street
Bishops Stortford
Herts CM23 3AG
England

Somerset House
417 Maitland Avenue
Teaneck
New Jersey 07666
USA

Date of publication and production of master: 1975

Series: The purpose of this series is to make available those catalogues that have lasting interest through their text or their illustrations. Catalogues and cumulations of titles in the series are available from the publishers

Serial numbers: Each title is given a seven-figure serial number in the top right hand corner of the microfiche title strip. This is an accession number. The first figure indicates the number of the list in which the title first appears; the first three-figure group signifies the gallery or museum; the second three-figure group the accession number for that title.

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Technical data:

Producing laboratory: Micromedia Ltd, Kidlington, Oxford.

New trends in painting

Some pictures from a private collection

The Arts Council of Great Britain : 1956

Foreword

IT IS an historic fact that the various 'isms of contemporary art which have emerged during the present century have originated elsewhere and have always made a more or less belated arrival in this country. This is no less true of recent developments for which a variety of descriptive names, among them *tachisme*, *l'art brut*, *l'art autre* and *action painting* is already current. Mr. Lawrence Alloway in his perceptive introduction defines the common tendencies of the artists concerned and characterises these new trends as 'Other art'. His use of the word 'challenge' and his emphasis on the originality of the artists are justified although, of course, every new movement has its roots and such a breakaway was in some respects foreshadowed by Kandinsky and the surrealists.

So far no representative selection of *l'art autre* has been shown in this country, although retrospective exhibitions both of de Stael and Dubuffet have been seen at Whitechapel and the I.C.A. respectively, and their influence has already left its mark on some of our younger English painters and sculptors. Works by four of the artists represented in this exhibition can also be seen in the Tate Gallery.

We are, therefore, much indebted to the anonymous private collector who has so generously lent this group of paintings for public showing in this country.

PHILIP JAMES

Introduction

THE CHALLENGE OF POST-WAR PAINTING

by Lawrence Alloway

Painting is a tangible, sensory experience KAREL APPEL

SINCE the war a new movement in modern art has developed. It has been called *action painting*, *l'art autre*, and *tachisme*. It is necessary to define these related terms because most of the paintings in this exhibition belong to this kind of art. A striking feature of the movement is its rejection of the rest of modern art. The artists concerned believe that the art of the recent past has established an academy of modern styles, as limiting in its way as the nineteenth-century academies and salons. They are aiming at a different kind of art.

The most general term for the new movement is *l'art autre*. Why *other art*? The term was coined by Michel Tapié who used it to distinguish this new kind of art from the earlier kinds. 'From the end of 1944', he wrote, 'something *other* began to make itself forcibly felt.' A special feature of Other art, the new freedom with which paint is used, is emphasised by the word *tachisme* (from *tache*, stain). So, too, the American term 'action painting' draws attention to the artist's use of his medium, his physical action with his materials.

This unusual stress on the action of the artist, splashing his canvas, building up the paint, and so on, dispenses with most of the conventions of traditional modern art. The rejected rhetoric includes geometry, formal composition, and the purification of art by the exclusion of objects. Other art, freed from these devices, is an art reduced to the basic physical ingredients of painting. The painter is like Robinsoe Crusoe faced with his island.

The artists in this exhibition do not take sides in the now academic quarrel between realism and non-figurative art. They are concerned with neither alternative. What they want is something that is real as a painting, in which the physical qualities of paint have not been suppressed by a fixed idea of finish or elaborated to a point of excessive refinement. One of the first artists to formulate this attitude was Jean Dubuffet, who, in the

mid-forties, exhibited his *hautes pâtes*, thickly impasted pictures. The artist himself said: 'I see no great difference (metaphysically, that is) between the paste I spread and a cat, a trout or a bull. My paste is a being as these are.' That is to say, the paint has a life of its own. Dubuffet's world, of stratified landscapes and monolithic or tattered figures, grows out of his paint. This interest in the physical nature of paint entails an ability to benefit by 'accidents' which occur in the course of painting which is, of course, not new. Two early paintings by Max Ernst in this exhibition demonstrate his exploitation of accidents: he obtained chance stains and rubbings on his canvases which he built up into sensuous and suggestive textures. That Dubuffet has been influenced by Ernst can be seen by comparing his *American Landscape* with Ernst's *Sombre Forest and Bird.*

The highly developed feeling for paint commits the artist to a new approach to painting. Each picture must be read as a record of the artist's actions while producing that painting. Pierre Soulages has described his experience of the creative process in these words: 'I have not what one would call an imaginary model nor even a precise intention; I work, guided by an inner impulse, a longing for certain forms, colours, materials, and it is not until they are on the canvas that they tell me what I want. It is what I do that teaches me what I am seeking. It is only by painting that I learn what I am seeking.'

Even artists independent of Other art reveal a similar sense of paint as a substance no less real and obdurate than a sculptor's solid material. The civilised Nicolas de Stael, for example, restlessly explored the possibilities of paint, as can be seen in the series of pictures, done between 1948 and 1954, in this exhibition. He moved from free, scattered non-figurative forms to a period in which rectangular dabs of thick paint occupied the canvas. These dabs were transformed, with a little juggling, into landscape or still-life. In these late works de Stael seems to be, not trying to return to 'nature' as opponents of non-figurative art hurried to say, but trying to reconcile the specific properties of paint with the creation of images. All his images are simplified so that his medium can retain its sensuous freedom: he aims at a balance of sign and matter.

Probably an early impression of many visitors to this exhibition will be of violence: an impact of the quick and the big. Certainly, Dubuffet, Appel, and Bogart manhandle their paint

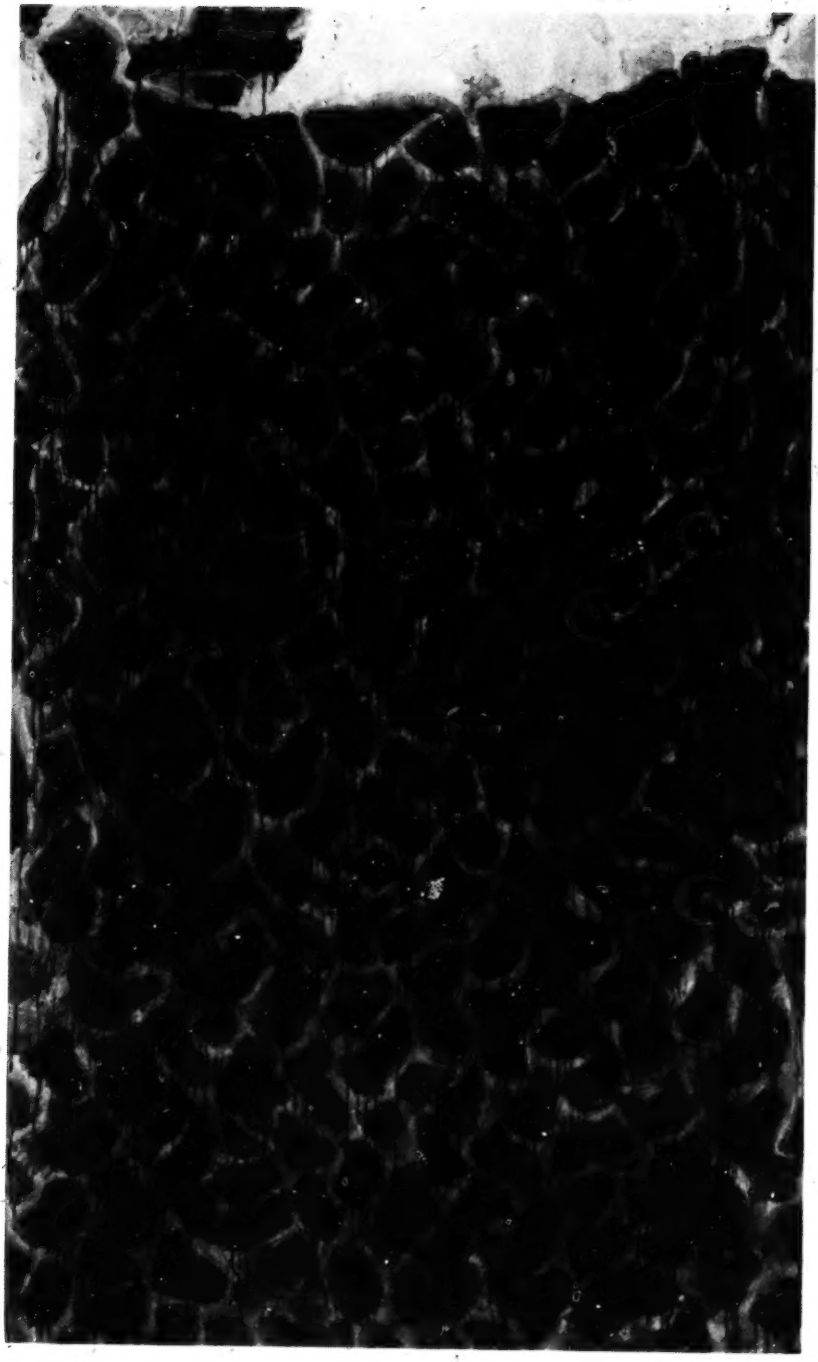
as if it were raw material. To them art is more like a game of hopscotch than a game of chess with hand-carved men. Typical of their vigour is the tendency to rapidity of execution and largeness of scale. A clue to the rugged character of Other art may be found in a collection Dubuffet formed in the 1940s, of what he called *l'art brut*, rough art. This was his name for art by untrained artists, mental cases, mediums, prisoners, children, savages. This collection manifested the belief that art is not a refined, learned, sacred temple but an urgent, unexpected, mysterious activity. This violent refusal to confine art by precedent, however powerful, is analogous to existentialism. During and after the war French existentialists stressed the isolation of the individual and the consequent uniqueness of his acts. This is similar to the importance of the artist's gestures or actions in Other art.

Other art, however, is capable of elegance. The juicy profusion of Jean-Paul Riopelle's paint, the glittering skin of Paul Jenkins' pictures, and the bland undulating surface of Sam Francis', are handsome participants in the general post-war competition in painterliness. They also, in all their elegance, involve us in issues no less radical than Dubuffet's. Both Francis and Riopelle avoid the presence of solid forms and points of focus in their pictures. Space to Francis is not a gap between things, but an active area full of the vibrations of light and the pull of gravity (recorded by the downward trickle of his paint). Space is as full of events as a drop of water under a microscope. Compared to the hovering fluid structure of Francis' paintings a portrait by Picasso looks suddenly traditional. Although the sitter may be 'distorted' a Picasso half-length is nearer to Sir Godfrey Kneller's kit-kat portraits than it is to Other art.

These characteristics of (1) a high estimate of the artist's freedom of action with his materials, and (2) of a fluid, crowded continuous space expressed by means of random compositions, belong to Other art. But they should not be regarded as a formula: they are meaningless without the adventurous, anti-theoretical spirit in which they were created. The originality and vitality of the individuals who make up the movement cannot be learned by imitating their forms.

In Paris the main exhibition centres have been René Drouin's galleries in the Place Vendôme and the Rue Visconti and, later, Michel Tapié's *Galerie Rive Droite* and *Galerie Stadler*. In addi-

JEAN DUBUFFET *The Orator* 1955 (11)

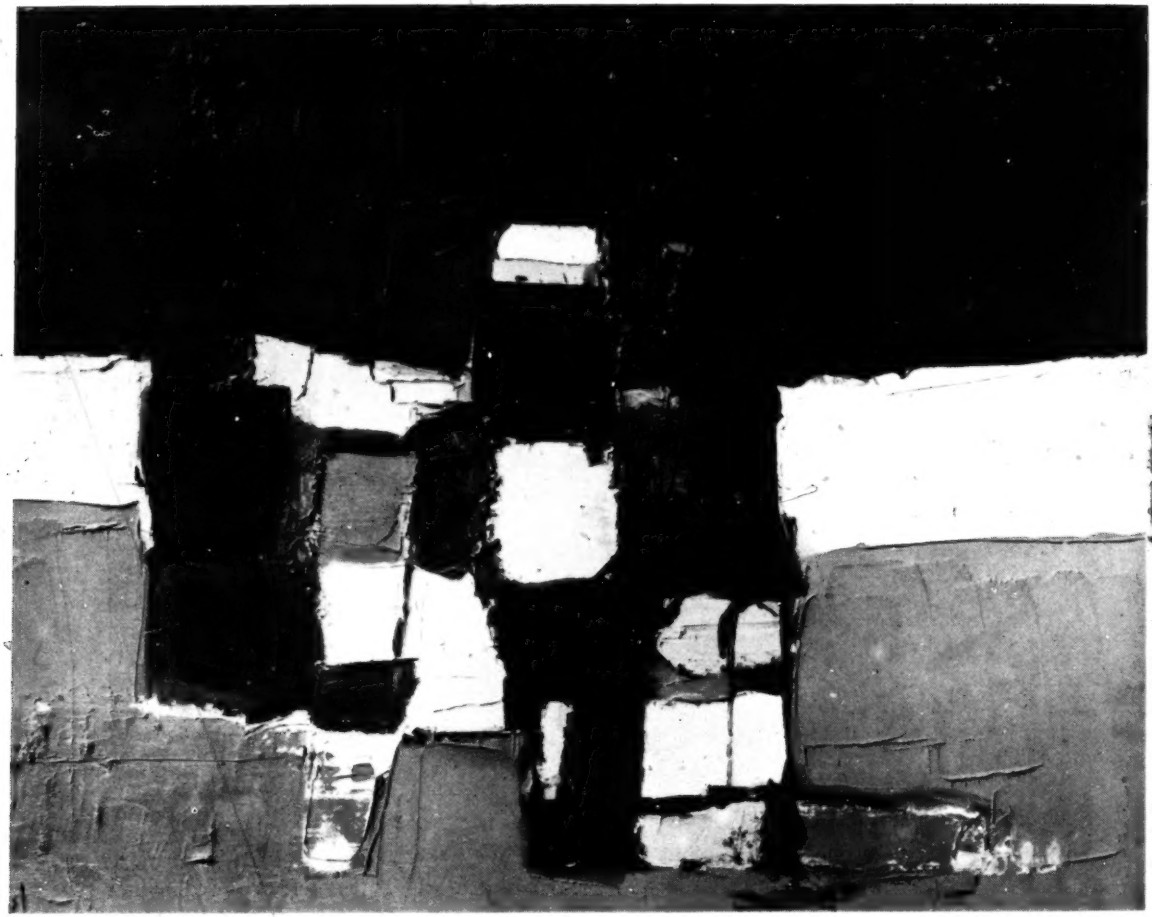


SAM FRANCIS *Painting, blue* 1954 (19)

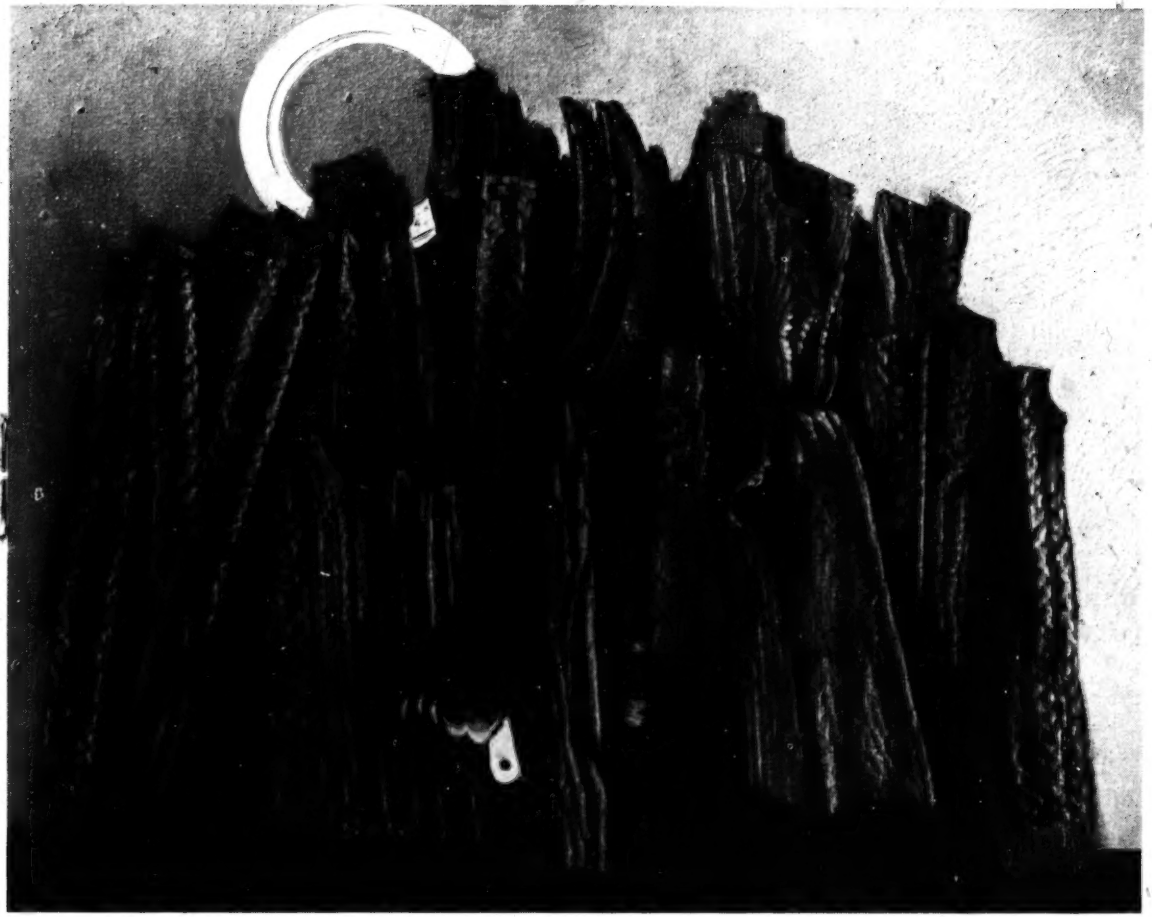
tion, several group shows in other galleries helped to crystallise the new tendencies: *l'Imaginaire* (1947), *HWPSMTB* (the initials of the participants' surnames), and *White and Black* (both in 1948). Information about the new movement was carried beyond Paris, from the late 1940s, by catalogues, magazines, and a few books (see bibliography). Collectors have played an important part in the flow of communications about the new art. Peggy Guggenheim's collection in Venice, for example, was, in the late 1940s, the best place in Europe to see the work of Jackson Pollock (who has profoundly influenced European Other art).

The collection from which these thirty pictures come has been formed in England in the past five years. It is unique in England and impressive anywhere. It is difficult to characterise a collector who desires to be anonymous, but a question that must be answered is, how did he come to assemble a magnificent collection of the first original art for thirty years, at a time when other British collectors, museums, and commercial galleries knew next to nothing about it? Unlike other British collectors his outlook is experimental and his judgment thoroughly independent. He is motivated by curiosity, a quality almost extinct in English art circles. Those who can afford to collect works of art usually buy as an investment, as a duty, for decoration, or out of acquisitiveness. This collector, however, is not committed to any of these established motives. He may buy a picture to find out what he really thinks about it. He buys new work while the paint is still wet, while the aesthetic with which to describe and evaluate it is still in the making. He collects more pictures than he has room for because his purchases keep pace with the developments of the artists.

This anonymous collector works, one cannot help guessing, in the spirit in which his artists paint—impulsively, experimentally, to see what will happen. The usual time-lag between modern art and the English collector is closed by this individual. The usual time-lag between modern art and public knowledge can, if visitors take advantage of the present exhibition, also be narrowed.



NICOLAS DE STAEL *Composition* 1951 (5)



MAX ERNST *Sombre Forest and Bird* 1926 (14)

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GEORGES A. MATHIEU, editor, *United States Lines Paris Review*, Paris, 1953.

DOROTHY C. MILLER, editor, *Twelve Americans*, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1956.

ANDREW CARNDUFF RITCHIE, editor, *The New Decade*, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1955.

HAROLD ROSENBERG, *The American Action Painters*, *Art News*, LI, 8, New York, 1952.

MICHEL TAPIÉ, *Un art autre*, Gabriel-Giraud et fils, Paris, 1952.

PIERRE SCHNEIDER, *Jean-Paul Riopelle*, in *L'Œil* 18, Paris, 1956.

J. J. SWEENEY, *The Younger European Painters*, The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, 1953.

WHITECHAPEL ART GALLERY, *Catalogue of Memorial Exhibition of Nicolas de Stael*, London, 1956.

Catalogue

KAREL APPEL

Born 1921 in Holland. Settled in Paris 1950. Co-founder of Dutch experimental group, and magazine *Cobra*, now dissolved. Mural and graphic artist. Numerous exhibitions since 1946. Retrospective exhibition at *Galerie Rive Droite*, Paris, and *Stedelijk Museum*, Amsterdam, 1955.

1. Head 1954 $37\frac{1}{2} \times 22$ *Oil on canvas*
2. Bird 1955 $32 \times 39\frac{1}{2}$ *Oil on canvas*

A. BOGART

Born 1921 in Holland. Lives in Paris. First one-man exhibition at *Galerie Bignou*, Paris, 1956.

3. Abstract 1955 $57\frac{1}{2} \times 51\frac{1}{2}$ *Composition on canvas*

NICOLAS DE STAEL

Born 1914 in Russia. Settled in Paris in 1943. One-man exhibitions since 1944. Friendship with Georges Braque. Personal non-figurative style achieved *ca.* 1945. 1949–51, period of impasto; 1952–5, increasing interest in still life, figure composition, and landscape. Died 1955. Memorial exhibitions at *Musée National d'Art Moderne*, Paris, and *Whitechapel Art Gallery*, London.

4. Composition 1948 32 ×24 *Oil on canvas*
5. Composition 1951 $25\frac{1}{2} \times 32$ *Oil on canvas*
6. Football at Night 1952 32 ×26 *Oil on canvas*
7. Channel at Gravelines 1954 29 ×39 *Oil on canvas*
8. Two Pears and Apple 1954 23 ×32 *Oil on canvas*

JEAN DUBUFFET

Born 1901 in France. Lives in Paris. One-man exhibitions since 1944 in Paris and New York. Formed Society for the collection of *l'art brut*. Experiments in painting media, sculpture and

collage. Writer of several pamphlets. Retrospective exhibition at *Institute of Contemporary Arts*, London, 1955.

9.	American Landscape 1952	25½ × 36	*Composition on board*
10.	Man with a Yellow Tie 1954	36 × 29	*Oil on canvas*
11.	The Orator 1955	39½ × 32	*Oil on canvas*
12.	Traveller with a Bag 1955	31 × 24½	*Collage*
13.	The Living Blood 1955	25½ × 21½	*Oil on canvas*

MAX ERNST

Born 1891 in Germany. Connected with the dada movement in 1917; central figure of surrealism since 1924. Experimented with collage, *frottage* (rubbing) in *Histoire Naturelle* (1926), and sculpture. America, 1941–9. Settled in Paris in 1950. Numerous one-man exhibitions. Retrospective exhibition at *Institute of Contemporary Arts*, London, 1952. Represented in *The Tate Gallery*, London.

14.	Sombre Forest and Bird 1926	25½ × 32	*Oil on canvas*
15.	Flowers 1928	32 × 26	*Oil on canvas*
16.	Spring Picture 1954	21½ × 25½	*Oil on canvas*
17.	Homage to Yves Tanguy 1955	19¾ × 25½	*Oil on canvas*

SAM FRANCIS

Born 1923 in America. Began painting on the west coast of America in 1945. Settled in Paris in 1950. Exhibitions in Paris and New York. Previously seen in England at the group exhibition *Opposing Forces* at the *Institute of Contemporary Arts*, London, 1953.

18.	Painting, white 1951	56 × 40½	*Oil on canvas*
19.	Painting, blue 1954	58 × 35	*Oil on canvas*
20.	Red and black 1955	17½ × 14	*Watercolour*
21.	Blue 1955	17½ × 14	*Watercolour*

PAUL JENKINS

Born 1923 in America. Settled in Paris in 1953. One-man exhibitions in Paris, Germany, New York. Associated with *l'art autre* since 1955. Editor of *Observations of . . . Michel Tapié*, 1956.

22.	Phoenix 1955	51½ × 38½	*Oil on canvas*
23.	The Leap 1955	21½ × 32	*Oil on canvas*

JEAN-PAUL RIOPELLE

Born 1923 in Canada. Settled in Paris in 1947. Exhibited at *Galerie du Luxembourg* in *L'Imaginaire*, 1947, with Wols, Hartung, Mathieu. Numerous one-man exhibitions. Retrospective exhibition at *Gimpel fils*, 1956. Represented in *The Tate Gallery*, London.

24. Painting 1948 — 32 × 39½ *Oil on canvas*
25. Painting 1953 — 28 × 36 *Oil on canvas*

PIERRE SOULAGES

Born 1919 in France. Settled in Paris in 1946. Friendship with Hartung. First non-figurative art in 1947. One-man shows in Paris, Germany, New York, London (*Gimpel fils*, 1955). Represented in *The Tate Gallery*, London.

26. Painting 1952 — 39½ × 25½ *Oil on canvas*
27. Painting 1955 — 51 × 34 *Oil on canvas*

PRINTED BY
BENHAM AND COMPANY LIMITED, COLCHESTER

New trends in painting

Some pictures from a private collection

The Arts Council of Great Britain : 1957

Foreword

IT IS commonly assumed, and usually with justice, that the various 'isms of contemporary art which have emerged during the present century have originated elsewhere and have made a more or less belated arrival in this country. It would, however, seem that this is hardly true of the recent developments in painting for which various descriptive names, among them *tachisme*, *art brut*, *art autre* and *action painting* are already current. The interesting suggestion has recently been made by Mr. David Sylvester (*Arts*, March 1957) that under the name of *Objective Abstraction* the work of three then young painters—Rodrigo Moynihan, the late Graham Bell and the late Geoffrey Tibble—anticipated in 1934 the present international movement without influencing it: just as late Turner, from which *Objective Abstraction* was descended, preceded another international movement without influencing it.

In his perceptive introduction to this catalogue Mr. Lawrence Alloway defines the common tendencies of the artists concerned and chooses the title of *other art*, in preference to the American phrase *action painting* which should strictly be confined to the style, in which emphasis is laid on the physical action and ingredients of painting. Inevitably, in a movement which challenges so decisively established aesthetic doctrines, the means of expression found by its artists differ widely. And if, in their manner, individual paintings seem occasionally to resemble the work of earlier painters (Kandinsky and the surrealists, Monet, Van Gogh and the expressionists) the similarity is superficial: the underlying aesthetic is quite different. *Other art* can, however, claim to produce a fusion of the two elements underlying all painting which, to quote Mr. David Sylvester again, are '. . . its autonomous existence as a thing which in itself arrests the eye and its embodiment in some way of something other than itself.'

The bulk of the present exhibition has already been shown in a number of provincial centres. When it was first shown in Cambridge last autumn it formed the first representative selection of *other art* to be presented in England. Since then there have been exhibitions, notably at Tooth's, Gimpels and at the I.C.A. which have consolidated our knowledge of the movement; and a recent exhibition at the Redfern Gallery has demonstrated its enthusiastic and rapid acceptance by English painters. Nevertheless, the present collection can claim to state more fully than has yet been attempted the character and range of the movement as developed in Paris.

This being so, it is all the more remarkable that all the pictures should belong to one private collector. Mr. Alloway has paid in his introduction apt tribute to his enterprise. We must add our gratitude for the opportunity of bringing these paintings before a wider public. P.J.

Introduction

SINCE the war a new movement in modern art has developed. It has been called Action Painting, *art autre*, and *tachisme*. It is necessary to define briefly these related terms because most of the paintings in this exhibition belong to this kind of art. A striking feature of the movement is its rejection of the rest of modern art, or most of it. The artists concerned believe that the art of the recent past has established an academy of modern styles, as limiting in its way as the nineteenth-century academies and salons. They are aiming at a different kind of art.

The most general terms for the new movement is *art autre*. Why *other* art? The term was coined by Michel Tapié who used it to distinguish this new kind of art from the earlier kinds. 'From the end of 1944', he wrote, 'something *other* began to make itself forcibly felt.' A special feature of Other art, the new freedom with which paint is used, is emphasised by the word *tachisme* (from *tache*, stain). So, too, the American term 'Action Painting', which draws attention to the artist's use of his medium, his physical action with his materials.

This exceptional stress on the action of the artist, splashing his canvas, building up the paint, and so on, dispenses with many of the conventions of traditional modern art. The rejected rhetoric includes geometry, formal composition, and the purification of art by the exclusion of objects. Other art, freed from these devices, is an art reduced to the basic physical ingredients of painting. The painter is like Robinson Crusoe faced with his island.

This highly developed feeling for paint commits the artist to a new approach to painting. Each picture must be read as a record of the artist's actions while producing that painting. Pierre Soulages has described his experience of the creative process in these words:

> I have not what one would call an imaginary model nor even a precise intention; I work, guided by an inner impulse, a longing for certain forms, colours, materials, and it

is not until they are on the canvas that they tell me what I want. It is what I do that teaches me what I am seeking. It is only by painting that I learn what I am seeking.

A technical consequence of the new approach to the act of painting is a changed relation between the parts and the whole: that is to say, the paint, the brush marks, the touches with the palette knife, the pressure of the hands, have a high visibility. Even as we look at the whole image of the painting we are aware of the technical means, the decisions, by which the work was made. This is true of Dubuffet's *hautes pâtes* and *collages*, of the choked *bocage* of Riopelle, of Soulages' majestic structures, of Francis' effects of space which do not permit any vagueness in the means, and of de Stael's play with adjacent areas of colour and paint. There is a structural clarity about the best of these works, which belies the initial appearance of untidy or sensuous improvisation: the parts do not disappear into the whole finished work but retain their identity.

A clue to the rugged character of Other art may be found in a collection Jean Dubuffet formed in the 1940s, of what he termed *l'art brut*. This was his name for art by untrained artists—mental cases, mediums, prisoners, children, savages. This collection was based on the belief that art is not a refined, learned, sacred temple but an urgent, unexpected, mysterious activity. The violent refusal to confine art by precedent, however powerful, is analogous to existentialism. During and after the war French existentialists stressed the isolation of the individual and the consequent uniqueness of his acts. This is similar to the importance of the artist's actions or gestures in Other art and to Dubuffet's aggressive anthropology, which located art anywhere.

Even artists independent of Other art reveal a comparable sense of paint as a substance no less real and obdurate than a sculptor's solid material. The civilised Nicolas de Stael, for example, restlessly explored the possibilities of paint, as can be seen in the series of picture, done between 1948 and 1954, in this exhibition. He moved from free, scattered non-figurative forms (7) to a period in which rectangular dabs of thick paint occupied the canvas (9). These dabs were transformed, with a little juggling, into landscapes or still life. In these late works de Stael seems to be, not trying to 'return to nature', as opponents of non-figurative art hurried to say, but trying to reconcile the

specific properties of paint with the creation of images. All his images are simplified (12) so that his medium can retain its sensuous facture: he aims at a balance of sign and matter.

In the art world a movement's reputation undergoes two early phases. First, it must be defined as a cohesive movement, its slogans translated and established; after various delays this stage of Other art has now been reached in England. However, premature misinterpretations threaten it already and the need for detailed information about the individuals within the movement has become urgent. At this stage, the differences, within the similarities described above, should be stated.

This exhibition includes the work of various artists associated with Other art over a period of years, so that it is possible to see how artists of different character and purpose have developed within the general framework of the movement. It is essential to understand that Other art, like Action Painting, is not a closed programme but an attitude towards art which nourishes individuality, and not conformity, even to its own tenets. By emphasising the course of development followed by several of the artists represented here it is hoped to show that Other art is permissive and full of possibilities (which is the reason for Michel Tapié's constant praise of dada's individualism), unlike some of the movements of modern art which have been rigid and academic.

This exhibition represents the contribution made by the School of Paris to Other art, not in historical terms but as a sample of the high quality and independence achieved by several of its artists. Even the two Americans in the show are closely identified with Parisian ideas. Francis, for example, has been called a member of 'L'Ecole du Pacific', which is a European invention, derived from a misunderstanding of American geography. There is nothing specific to West Coast painting which is not shared by New York painting of the same style: Francis' individuality depends on himself, not on the fictional Pacific School.

Jean Dubuffet's development in the period covered by this exhibition reveals both inventiveness and continuity. The basic factor in his work is an attachment to materials, by means of which he creates a world. He writes of his materials:

> Those who imagine that these kinds of pastes are something inert make a grave mistake. . . . My connections with the material I use is like the bond of the dancer with his partner, the rider with his horse, the fortune teller with her cards.

His technical means have included, in addition to oil paint, mortars of his own composition to obtain relief, grounds which—as they dry—change the behaviour of glazes applied over them, and collages.

From dark landscapes, somewhere between a soil sample and a world-view (*American Landscape*, 15, is a late example of this theme), Dubuffet evolved to the *corps de dame* series (13). The female figure was presented as a flat inscription of the picture surface, but the knobbly thickness of the surface returned substance to the flattened figure. The drama of the image and the character of the materials are identified. From the centred form of the *corps de dame* it was a logical step to the tables (14) which look like four-legged octupuses, an extension and simplification of the steamrollered anatomies. The evocativeness of pictures close to formlessness, dependent to an unusual degree on the spectator's power to recognise its possibilities, fascinated the artist at this period. 'I am convinced that any table can be for each of us a landscape as inexhaustible as the whole Andes range.'

The middle 'fifties has shown a shift away from primal materials towards images which, though powerful, are paradoxically constructed of delicate components. These recent works are comparatively relaxed and genial (20). From a collection of prepainted collage elements Dubuffet assembles landscapes or figures which are the sum of numerous separate parts, each piece of which retains its individuality even as it contributes to the whole of the lyrical image.

Dubuffet's influence can be seen in Bogart who takes the *hautes pâtes* and makes of them great natural slabs, free of even Dubuffet's images. Cave paintings have replaced negro carving as *the* popular primitive art and Bogart takes easel painting near to the appearance of the cave wall, rugged, wrinkled, raw material with a minimum of esthetic interference.

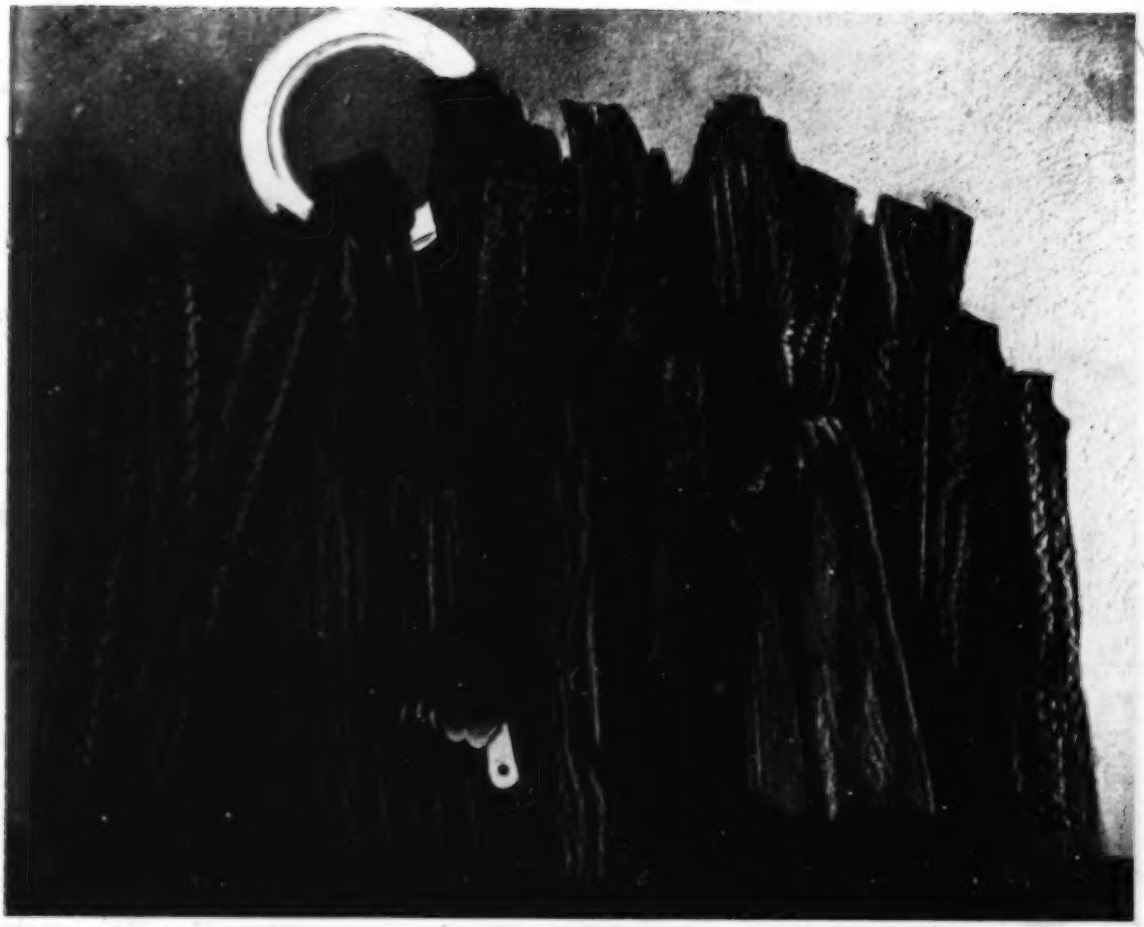
Karel Appel has developed Dubuffet's *l'art brut* into a kind of international primitivism in which birds, animals, and a few

people enact turbulent fables (2, 3). He has elaborated this iconography since about 1947 and by 1952 he arrived at the dense impastos he now uses. More recently, under the impetus of Dubuffet's early portraits and of his own giantism, Appel has painted a series of enormous portrait heads (4). Unlike Dubuffet, however, he has kept unswervingly to oil paint which he applies in mammoth whirls and clusters.

Like other post-war artists who are concerned with image-making he reduces the conventions by which imagery had previously been ordered. Composition, as it operates traditionally to control imagery, is reduced to a minimal presentation: animals and people are placed side by side, or one above the other; a head occupies the centre of the canvas. Similarly drawing is simplified to the gesture of the artist with the brush or palette knife. Thus, Appel's work has two basic elements—the unruly paint and the burly image—each of which he keeps as free as possible from additional conventions. His strong-arm charm consists of developing simultaneously the paint as the carrier of images and as a substance of autonomous texture and sensuous weight.

Riopelle, when he arrived in Paris in 1946, was influenced by André Breton's *Le surrealisme et le peinture*. This is worth recording because it enables one to oppose the 'abstract expressionist' label which always threatens to reduce all post-war painterly art to a misleading uniformity. For example, Riopelle's style of the late 'forties (33) was a spectacle of excitably worked paint and dark chiaroscuro, but it was performed as liberated gesture, as action, rather than as the expressionist's protesting cry with symbolic form and colour. The masterly darkness of these works was succeeded by a constructional style which increased the thickness of the paint and concentrated it to a single unit, a rectangular dice of paint, unlike the forms of all sizes he had been using. All-over composition developed in 1951 based on the repetition, from edge to edge, of regular mosaic-like bits of paint (34). Each square in the paintings of this time kept a basic clarity. Lately, however, Riopelle has returned to a larger massing by arranging his palette-knife dabs in rows, like closed zip-fasteners, and by a tonal massing of dark and light, comparable to the distribution of traditional chiaroscuro (36).

Sam Francis' paintings early in the 'fifties tended towards an all-over play of neutral stains, as random and as regular as rain



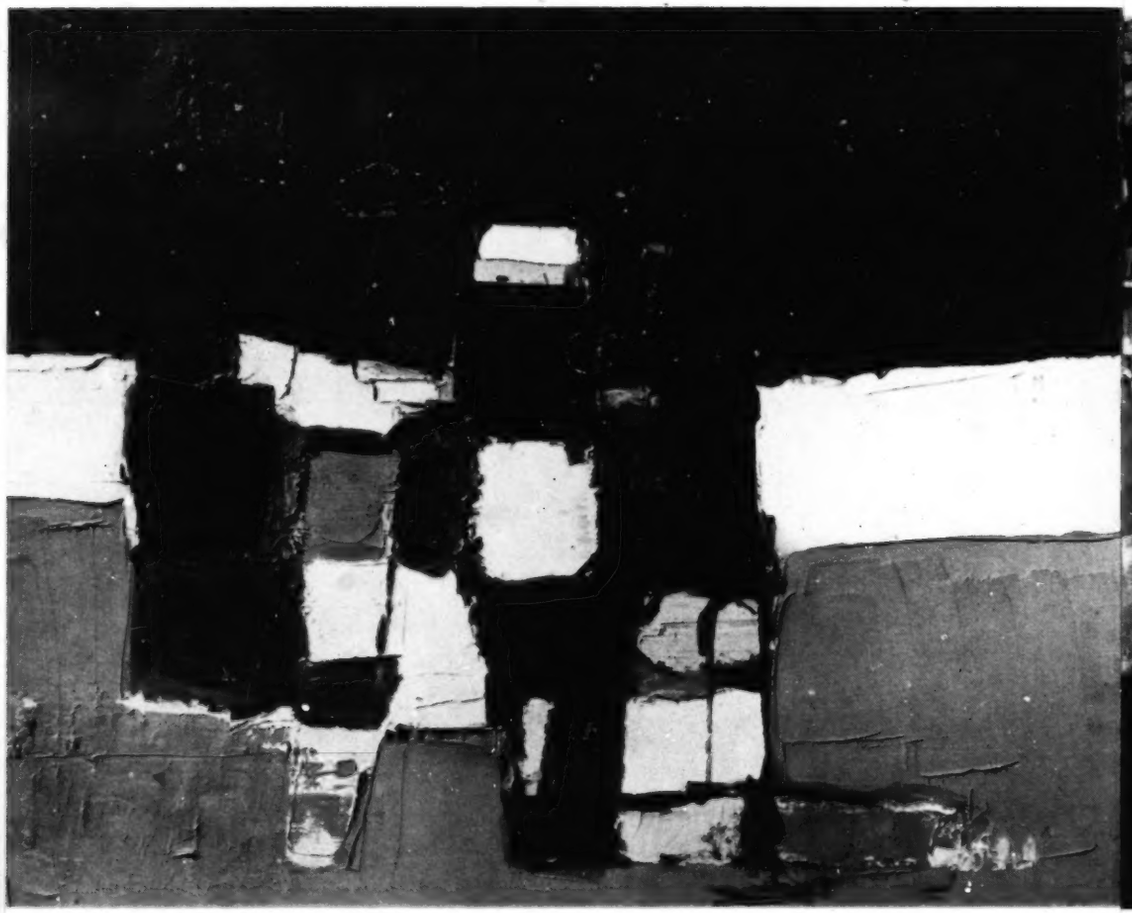
MAX ERNST *Sombre Forest and Bird* 1926 (21)

JEAN DUBUFFET *Woman's body* 1950 (13)

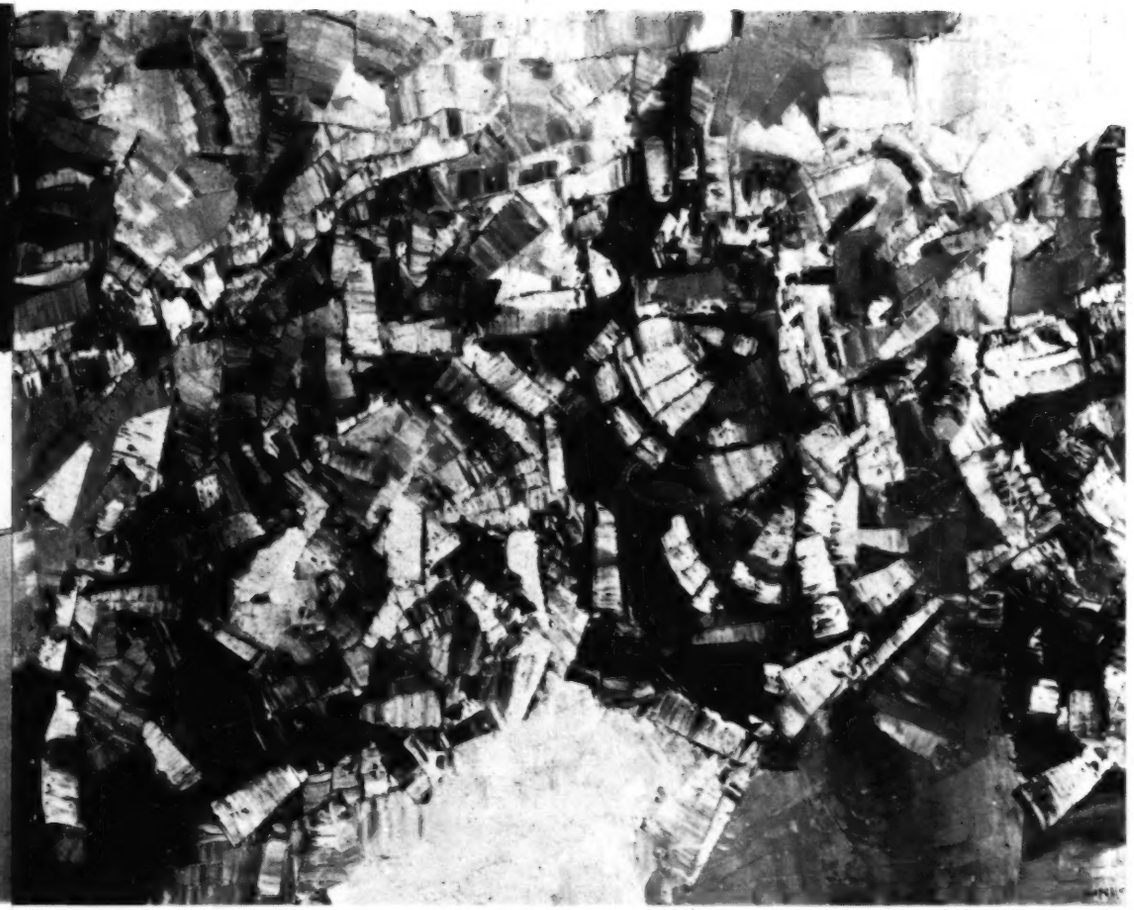
JEAN DUBUFFET *The Orator* 1955 (17)

SAM FRANCIS *Painting* 1956 (30)

opposite:
SAM FRANCIS *Painting, blue* 1954 (26)



NICOLAS DE STAEL *Composition* 1951 (9)



JEAN-PAUL RIOPELLE *Painting* 1956 (36)

KAREL APPEL *Portrait of Sandberg* (4)

drops on the windscreen of a car. Each painting was one predominate colour which was controlled by gentle cessation at or near the edges of the canvas (25). The line of Francis' development has been towards the interruption of all-overness. Though his paintings are still characterised by a continuous ripple of smallish forms, they have been amplified, so that forms are more sharply individual and more complex in colour (30). He has retained the clarity of the parts which make up the whole picture, but these now curve and flow, establishing dramatic processions and oppositions, across the picture area.

The directional play of his shapes, often oblique, is opposed by the vertical trickle of his diluted paint, asserting, under the pull of gravity, the liquidity of his material. The dribble acts as a kind of natural grid opposing the constructed shapes of the painter's choice. His paint, diluted to the thinnest washes, permits the white canvas to shine through the paint, as it does in Bonnard's paintings. The effects he creates range from the crepuscular to the radiant; this is light and space without the objects which we are accustomed to see them define. What they define in Francis' work, which carries on discoveries of the late Monet, is the picture itself, making of it the misty or brilliant object.

Other art has ancestors, of course, especially in surrealism and impressionism. (Also in dada, but Other art does not physically resemble dada which is the point here.) Impressionists were not specifically represented by Tapié as anticipators of Other art but Riopelle, who discovered Monet in 1950 or 1951, found that his pictures were already analogous to the *Nymphéas*, in their dense sensuous surface and spreading spatial composition. Max Ernst, the surrealist who more than any other elaborated automatic processes, is a powerful precursor. The organisation of a picture on a textural painterly basis, which dramatises the material used in the creative process, is his distinctive contribution—even though Ernst himself is not sympathetic towards its development in the newer painters' work. Early paintings by him in this exhibition demonstrate (21) his exploitation of material processes: he obtained chance rubbings (*frottage*) and stains on his canvases which he built up into sensuous suggestive textures. That Dubuffet has been influenced by *frottage* can be seen by comparing his *American Landscape* with Ernst's *Sombre Forest and Bird*. Another aspect of Ernst's influence can be seen in Paul

Jenkins' work in which paint slips, slides, and coalesces to form infernal or glacial spaces reminiscent of Ernst's spectacular *decalcomanias* of the late 'thirties.

The collection from which these pictures come has been formed in England in the last six years. It is unique in England and impressive anywhere. It is difficult to characterise a collector who desires to be anonymous, but a question that must be answered is, how did he come to assemble a magnificent collection of the first original art for thirty years, at a time when other British collectors, museums, and commercial galleries knew next to nothing about it? Unlike other British collectors his outlook is experimental and his judgment thoroughly independent. He is motivated by curiosity, a quality almost unknown in English art circles today. Those who can afford to collect works of art usually buy as an investment, out of duty, for decoration, or from acquisitiveness. This collector, however, is not committed to any of these established motives. He may buy a picture to find out what he really thinks about it. He buys new work while the paint is still wet, while the esthetic with which to describe and evaluate it is still in the making. He collects more pictures than he has room for because his purchases keep pace with the development of the artists and with his own changing views.

This anonymous collector works, one cannot help guessing, in the spirit in which his artists paint—impulsively, experimentally, to see what will happen. The usual time-lag between modern art and the English collector is closed by this individual. The usual time-lag between modern art and public knowledge can, if visitors take advantage of the present exhibition, also be narrowed.

LAWRENCE ALLOWAY

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THOMAS B. HESS, *Dubuffet Paints a Picture*, in *Art News*, LI, 3, New York, 1952.

PAUL AND ESTHER JENKINS, editors, *Observations of . . . Michel Tapié*, Wittenborn Inc., New York, 1956.

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J. J. SWEENEY, *The Younger European Painters*, The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, 1953.

WHITECHAPEL ART GALLERY, *Catalogue of Memorial Exhibition of Nicolas de Stael*, London, 1956.

Catalogue

KAREL APPEL

Born 1921 in Holland. Settled in Paris 1950. Co-founder of Dutch experimental group 'reflex', and international *Cobra* group. Mural and graphic artist. Numerous exhibitions since 1946 including retrospective at *I.C.A.*, 1957. Retrospective exhibition at *Galerie Rive Droite*, Paris, and *Stedelijk Museum*, Amsterdam, 1955.

1.	Head 1954	37½ × 22	*Oil on canvas*
2.	Bird 1955	32 × 39½	*Oil on canvas*
3.	Man with a Spear 1955	40 × 32	*Oil on canvas*
4.	Portrait of Sandberg 1956	78 × 51½	*Oil on canvas*

A. BOGART

Born 1921 in Holland. Lives in Paris. First one-man exhibition at *Galerie Bignou*, Paris, 1956.

5.	Abstract 1955	57½ × 51½	*Composition on canvas*
6.	Prehistoric 1956	51½ × 45	*Composition on canvas*

NICOLAS DE STAEL

Born 1914 in Russia. Settled in Paris in 1943. One-man exhibitions since 1944. Friendship with Georges Braque. Personal non-figurative style achieved *ca.* 1945. 1949–51, period of impasto; 1952–5, increasing interest in still life, figure composition, and landscape. Died 1955. Memorial exhibitions at *Musée National d'Art Moderne*, Paris, and *Whitechapel Art Gallery*, London.

7.	Composition 1948	32 × 24	*Oil on canvas*
8.	Composition 1950	49 × 31¼	*Oil on board*
9.	Composition 1951	25½ × 32	*Oil on canvas*
10.	Football at Night 1952	32 × 26	*Oil on canvas*
11.	Channel at Gravelines 1954	29 × 39	*Oil on canvas*
12.	Two Pears and Apple 1954	23 × 32	*Oil on canvas*

JEAN DUBUFFET

Born 1901 in France. Lives in Paris. One-man exhibitions since 1944 in Paris and New York. Formed Society for the collection

of *l'art brut*. Experiments in painting media, sculpture and collage. Writer of several pamphlets. Retrospective exhibition at *Institute of Contemporary Arts*, London, 1955.

13.	Woman's body 1950	46 ×35	*Oil on canvas*
14.	Table 1951	46 ×35	*Composition on board*
15.	American Landscape 1952	25½ ×36	*Composition on board*
16.	Man with a Yellow Tie 1954	36 ×29	*Oil on canvas*
17.	The Orator 1955	39½ ×32	*Oil on canvas*
18.	Traveller with a Bag 1955	31 ×24½	*Collage*
19.	The Living Blood 1955	25½ ×21½	*Oil on canvas*
20.	Botany 1956	40 ×29	*Collage*

MAX ERNST

Born 1891 in Germany. Connected with the dada movement in 1917; central figure of surrealism since 1924. Experimented with collage, *frottage* in *Histoire Naturelle* (1926), and sculpture. America, 1941–9. Settled in Paris in 1950. Numerous one-man exhibitions. Retrospective exhibition at *Institute of Contemporary Arts*, London, 1952. Represented in *The Tate Gallery*, London.

21.	Sombre Forest and Bird 1926	25½ ×32	*Oil on canvas*
22.	Flowers 1928	32 ×26	*Oil on canvas*
23.	Spring Picture 1954	21½ ×25½	*Oil on canvas*
24.	Homage to Yves Tanguy 1955	19¾ ×25½	*Oil on canvas*

SAM FRANCIS

Born 1923 in America. Began painting on the west coast of America in 1945. Settled in Paris in 1950. Exhibitions in Paris and New York. First seen in England at the group exhibition *Opposing Forces* at the *Institute of Contemporary Arts*, London, 1953.

25.	Painting, white 1951	56 ×40½	*Oil on canvas*
26.	Painting, blue 1954	58 ×35	*Oil on canvas*
27.	Painting, blue and black 1954	77 ×51½	*Oil on canvas*
28.	Red and black 1955	17½ ×14	*Watercolour*
29.	Blue 1955	17½ ×14	*Watercolour*
30.	Painting, 1956	57 ×45	*Oil on canvas*

PAUL JENKINS

Born 1923 in America. Settled in Paris in 1953. One-man exhibitions in Paris, Germany, New York. Associated with *l'art autre* since 1955. Editor of *Observations of . . . Michel Tapié*, 1956. In group exhibition *The Exploration of Paint* at *Arthur Tooth & Sons*, 1957.

31. Phoenix 1955 — 51½ × 38½ *Oil on canvas*
32. The Leap 1955 — 21½ × 32 *Oil on canvas*

JEAN-PAUL RIOPELLE

Born 1923 in Canada. Settled in Paris in 1947. Exhibited at *Galerie du Luxembourg* in *L'Imaginaire*, 1947, with Wols, Hartung, Mathieu. Numerous one-man exhibitions. Retrospective exhibition at *Gimpel fils*, 1956. Represented in *The Tate Gallery*, London.

33. Painting 1948 — 32 × 39½ *Oil on canvas*
34. Painting 1953 — 28 × 36 *Oil on canvas*
35. Painting 1953 — 49 × 39½ *Oil on canvas*
36. Painting 1956 — 45½ × 64½ *Oil on canvas*

PIERRE SOULAGES

Born 1919 in France. Settled in Paris in 1946. Friendship with Hartung. First non-figurative art in 1947. One-man shows in Paris, Germany, New York, London (*Gimpel fils*, 1955). Represented in *The Tate Gallery*, London.

37. Painting 1952 — 39½ × 25½ *Oil on canvas*
38. Painting 1955 — 51 × 34 *Oil on canvas*
39. Painting 1955 — 77 × 51 *Oil on canvas*

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